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A MODEL AMERICAN LIBRARY OF 1793

"*A Selected Catalogue of some of the most esteemed Publications in the English Language. Proper to form a Social Library: With an Introduction upon the Choice of Books.* By Thaddeus M. Harris, A.M., Librarian of Harvard University. . . . Boston, 1793," is the title of a pamphlet in possession of the American Antiquarian Society. The librarian, when his attention was called to it, said that its existence had been before unknown to him, a fair proof, when one considers the remarkable information concerning old publications possessed by the librarian in question, that the existence of the pamphlet had practically, if not completely, passed from the memory of students of the early life of America. At any rate, this catalogue by Harris throws much light upon cultural, educational, and literary conditions in this country a century and a quarter ago.

"I have remarked with pleasure," he begins in his Introduction, "the reviving taste for literature among the different classes of people throughout the state. And the number and improved condition of our schools and other seminaries of learning, and daily plans for forming private and social libraries, are evidence of its increase, and predictions of its more general diffusion. Books, of course, are in great demand, and eagerly read. But they have become so exceedingly numerous as to require uninterrupted attention, through more than the longevity of an antediluvian, to peruse them all." "Surrounded by the largest collection of books in America, and having made it a constant practice to read *all* the English reviews," he thinks it not presumptuous to make this choice of books for the less fortunate. "As it has been my endeavour to form a catalogue for a *small* and *cheap* library, intended to suit the tastes and circumstances of common readers, many valuable works, in the higher departments of science, have been intentionally omitted." Enough, however, he affirms is included "*under each head* to give a *satisfactory and comprehensive* (though in some instances *very short*) view of that particular department of knowledge."

What does Harris mean by a "social library"? Evidently

he is using the word *social* in the widest possible sense, "relating to men living in society, or to the public as an aggregate body," as the catalogue itself will show, and not in the more highly specialized modern sense of the word where it tends to become more and more nearly confined to what may be synonymously expressed by *companionable*, *familiar*, *festive*. The word itself bears witness to the comparative simplicity of life in that period, and its lack of specialization: all human activities are lumped, more or less.

The Revolution, while it increased, of course, the number of political pamphlets, produced as a whole a deterrent effect upon the production and the spread of literature of a less controversial and purely temporary type. The stress of conflict and the needs of reconstruction left small chance for purely æsthetic interests. In 1793, however, Harris, who is apparently of all Americans in one of the best places to detect such a movement, sees a "reviving taste for literature"; and the catalogue is an attempt to meet, and, in some measure, to direct it.

But Harris did not feel himself capable of such direction without some extraneous aid. Practically no American, one may venture to say, would have so considered himself at this period; for the note of colonialism is strong in our intellectual life during this generation, and for that matter, during more than one subsequent one. Typically, then, Harris has "read *all* the English reviews." But one need not, on that account, distrust his ideas of what an American library should be like; for as our entire population was still looking largely towards England for intellectual guidance, he remains truly representative.

Moreover, Harris says that his catalogue is "intended to suit the taste and circumstances of common readers." Therefore the library he has planned reflects the intellectual needs of the people as a whole during his time, and not those of any particular class.

He follows Bacon and d'Alembert in dividing knowledge into the "three great divisions of the mental faculties, *memory*, *reason*, and *imagination*." The subdivisions under each head and the number of entries under each are interesting.

"Memory.—I Sacred History [8 entiers]; II Ecclesiastical History [2]; III Civil History, including Biography [40]; IV

Natural History [6]; V Voyages and Travels [24]; VI Geography and Topography [8].

"Reason.—I Theology [34]; II Mythology [3]; III Ethics [8]; IV Grammars and Dictionaries [7]; V Logic, Rhetoric, and Criticism [5]; VI General and Local Politics [10]; VII Law [5]; VIII Metaphysics [3]; IX Arithmetic, Geometry, and Algebra [4]; X Natural and Experimental Philosophy, including Astronomy [4]; XI Chymistry [3]; XII Agriculture [3]; XIII Arts and Manufactures [18].

"Imagination.—I Poetry and the Drama [30]; II Works of Fiction [11]; III Fine Arts [5]; IV Miscellanies [35]."

The entire number of entries is 276, the number of volumes is approximately 700. The cost of such a library at that time is somewhat problematical, but in the editions mentioned, which unfortunately are specified only occasionally, it could not have been, at the very least, less than \$1,500, a sum equal in purchasing power to several times that amount now.

Let us look at some of these divisions more closely; and let us select for special comment some of the works which throw most light upon the tastes and the needs of the frequenters of libraries in New England in 1793.

It is well perhaps to say "New England" in regard to three at least of the subdivisions which Harris gives. "Sacred History," "Ecclesiastical History," and "Theology" would be grouped by a modern librarian under the term *religion*. Even though *Ye Beare and ye Cubb*,—one of the first plays, if not the very first, acted south of the Mason and Dixon Line, got the actors into trouble, and even though the piety of the South has never been questioned, still, had the librarian of William and Mary or of any other Southern college drawn up such a plan, he would hardly have given to religion a total of forty-four entries out of two hundred and seventy-six, as did Puritan New England. I am inclined to think, also, that belles-lettres would have fared somewhat better in the South than it does here. But in broad outlines Harris's choice will apply to both sections. Into the ecclesiastical literature of the time it is not necessary at this date to enter: it is more abstruse than alchemy, more juiceless than an Egyptian mummy. Its psychology has been revealed in the

multitudinous pages of a Mather and a Cotton, a Mayhew and a Dwight. Let him who lists read Michael Wigglesworth's *Day of Doom*.

When, however, we turn to historians and biographers, Harris gives us names to conjure with: Belknap, Gibbon, Goldsmith, Hume, Hutchinson, Johnson, Robertson, Rollins, and Voltaire. Perhaps no one ever conjured with the name of Jeremy Belknap (1744-98), yet he did good service in the cause of American scholarship when he issued his *History of New Hampshire* and his *American Biographies*—even though the latter did begin with Biron, Modoc, and Zeno. The laurels on the brows of some of the others are sadly faded now; but in their own time they were all giants. Of all these, Goldsmith was assuredly the most popular, with Robertson a close second. William Robertson (1721-93), a Scottish historian, had works on Scotland, Charles V, Greece, and South America, and as early as 1792 his *Historical Disquisitions concerning the knowledge which the Ancients had of India* had been published, in octavo form, at Philadelphia. The high degree of specialization implied in this title indicates the unquestioned standing which its author had as a historian, for only a great reputation would make such a publication profitable in America. Robertson was, for his time, an accurate and painstaking historian whose appeal was to the most cultured readers of the period. But most of the histories of these days were inclined to approach more nearly the following two entries: Northouck's *Historical and Classical Dictionary; containing the Lives and Characters of the most eminent persons, in every age and nation, from the earliest periods to the present time*, in two volumes, octavo, and Thompson's *Spirit of General History, from the 8th to the 18th century; in a series of Lectures, wherein is given a view of the progress of Society, in Manners and Legislation, during that period*, octavo, London, 1792. Out of the forty titles under this general heading, seven are concerned with the history of the colonies, one with South America and one with the East and the West Indies. The popularity of the latter, Raynal's *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes* in its English translation of eight volumes was unusually great in this country,

a fact largely accounted for by revolutionary opinions therein expressed. Smollett, strange to say, is omitted, an omission that is even more marked in the field of fiction.

The History of England by Goldsmith was immensely popular, a popularity which endured far into the nineteenth century. As a whole, Goldsmith was correct enough for our forefathers, and in vivid style and human qualities all competitors were left far in the rear. For example, speaking of the women of early Britain he says: "Their hair was bound in wreaths, or fell in curls upon their shoulders; their arms were bare, and their bodies uncovered; fashions, which in some measure, seemed peculiar to the ladies of England to this day." Sober Clio, how she must have suffered from such passages! But our forefathers enjoyed them. Doubtless, too, many of them were ready to believe that King Arthur "killed no less than four hundred and forty of the enemy with his own hand."

Goldsmith also figures in the next division made by Harris, that of Natural History. His *History of Animated Nature*, 1784, had a great popularity until comparatively recent times. Harris does not include it in its entirety, doubtless because of the high price incident to its numerous plates. The full list, six entries in all, is as follows: Kirwan's *Mineralogy and Metallurgy*, 2 volumes; *Magellan on Mineral Waters and Eudeometers*; *Natural History of Insects*, compiled from Swammerdam, Brooks, Goldsmith, etc., embellished with plates, octavo, Perth, 1792; Riley's *Beauties of Creation: or a New Moral System of Natural History*, 2 volumes, London, 1790; Rousseau's *Botany; System of Natural History: Quadrupeds, Birds, Fishes, and Insects*, 3 volumes, octavo, Edinburgh, 1792.

One of these works, it may be noted in passing, was published at Perth, Scotland, a place which, together with Dublin, is surprisingly well represented in the publications of the times. Only occasionally does Harris specify editions, but he gives the size of the book in the large majority of cases. Our forefathers were determined to get full value for their money, and in a somewhat uncritical and unscientific age they made sure of quantity at least.

Magellan's contribution throws a pleasant light upon some of the blind alleys our ancestors got into, while Riley's new moral

system which he had evolved from the beauties of creation was no doubt popular with the great orthodox public.

One of the works on natural history most in vogue, *Erasmus Darwin's Botanic Garden, a Poem in Two Parts; Containing the Economy of Vegetation and the Loves of the Plants, with Philosophical Notes*, is given, however, under "Poetry and the Drama," Harris apparently being under the impression that the medium rather than the matter was the determining factor. The elaborate footnotes, containing what was, for the time, the solid information that our forefathers sought after, helped to popularize the work. Indeed, there is a larger amount of reading in the notes than in the text. Here was the æsthetic appeal of verse united to the most advanced science of the time, and doubtless our ancestors derived both "pleasure and profit" from its perusal. It is not a classic, like Gilbert White's *Natural History of Selborne*, because mere information overpowers imagination and sense of form, if Darwin possessed either of these. Commendatory poems by Cowper and by Hayley and the numerous fairly good illustrations aided in firmly establishing its wide popularity. The "Love of the Plants" is followed by the "Origin of Society." The entire volume serves as a sort of scientific manual of the time, chemistry, geology, biology, astronomy, and religion being passed in review.

It was a period, too, of sentiment that found expression in the *Botanic Garden* in this country long after Canning's burlesque, the "Loves of the Triangles," had laughed it out of its high standing in Great Britain.

The *Loves of the Plants* begins :—

"Descend, ye hovering Sylphs! aerial quires;
And sweep with little hands your silver lyres;
With fairy footsteps print your grassy rings,
Ye Gnomes! accordant to the tinkling strings:
While in soft notes I tune to oaten reed
Gay hopes and amorous sorrows of the mead.—
From giant oaks, that wave their branches dark,
To the dwarf moss that clings upon their bark,
What beaux and beauties crowd the gaudy groves,
And woo and win their vegetable loves.
How snowdrops cold, and blue-eyed harebells blend
Their tender tears, as o'er the stream they bend;

The love-sick violet, and the primrose pale,
 Bow their sweet heads, and whisper to the gale;
 With secret sighs the virgin lily droops,
 And jealous cowslips hang their tawny cups.
 How the young rose, in beauty's damask pride
 Drinks the warm blushes of his bashful bride;
 With honey'd lips enamour'd woodbines meet,
 Clasp with fond arms, and mix their kisses sweet."

Here is sentiment enough for our forefathers. Doubtless our ancestors held that, as an editor of Goldsmith says in regard to Goldsmith's *Animated Nature*, to Darwin "belonged the privilege of exhibiting in the golden light of genius a subject which had hitherto been only partially or barrenly disclosed." Just how barren even Goldsmith's disclosure was, viewed from a modern standpoint, may be gauged by a chapter of approximately fifteen hundred words entitled "A Sketch of the Universe," and an equally succinct one on "A Short Survey of the Globe, from the Light of Astronomy and Geography."

Voyages and travels are next reached; and the number of entries, twenty-four, shows the interest of Americans in other lands, especially in the great western background of their own fringe of settlements. The names of the writers become unfamiliar, however, save in the case of Bartram's *Travels through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida*, octavo, Philadelphia, 1791; Bruce's *Travels to discover the Source of the Nile*, six volumes, octavo, Dublin, 1790; Carver's *Travels into the interior parts of North America*; and Lobo's *Voyages to Abyssinia*, Dr. Johnson's edition.

In no department of literature save that of travel can Americans be said to have reached first rank in 1793. The lure of the wilderness was too powerful for some of our most virile men to resist, and a few of these commanding personalities occasionally had literary ability of no mean order, while Europe eagerly awaited all light that might be thrown upon the land where her venturesome children were putting their fate to the test. Audience and author then were in accord as seldom before, or since.

Two of these books, those produced by Europeans, have been lucky in that their existence has been held before humanity in greater pages than any their authors ever managed to pen. "Abyssinian" Bruce, through his story of the Abyssinians eating

steaks cut from living animals, excited the humor of Charles Lamb, who refers to his story in the beginning of a "Dissertation on Roast Pig." Lobo's *Voyages* gave the background of the happy valley in Dr. Johnson's *Rasselas*.

But the other two men need no such extraneous aid: they are great in their own rights, and can never be displaced, because the conditions which they described, passing soon away forever, cannot in the future be more accurately or vividly set forth by other men. Bartram, especially, was immensely popular both at home and abroad. By 1790 (Whitcomb says 1791), two editions of his *Travels* had appeared at Philadelphia, two at London in the next two years, and by 1801, editions had been published at Dublin, Berlin, Haarlam, and Paris. Land-hunger largely accounts for this European vogue, but why did our American forefathers read it? There were, of course, a certain number of people in this country who would turn to it for the same reason that Europeans did. It appealed also to the scientist as the report of a highly trained man, and it appeals to-day, as it did to the majority of readers of over a century ago through the sheer beauty of style and the imaginative power of many a passage. The "Introduction," a rather remarkable one for its irrelevance, length, and display of botanical learning, immediately acquaints us with the fact that Bartram is something of a word artist. Hear him in this average passage:—

"At the return of the morning, by the powerful influence of light, the pulse of nature becomes more active, and the universal vibration of life insensibly and irresistibly moves the wondrous machine: how cheerful and gay all nature appears. Hark! the musical savanna cranes, ere the chirping sparrow flirts from his grassy couch, or the glorious sun gilds the tops of the pines, spread their expansive wings, leave their lofty roosts, and repair to the ample plains."

Idyllic pictures of the inhabitants, whose homes are the "seat of virtue, where hospitality, piety, and philosophy formed the happy family" are numerous. The sense of beauty and of poetry is strongly appealed to, and the imagination is awakened in passages such as the following about the wild turkeys as they give their awakening calls in the early morning:—

"The high forests ring with the noise, like the crowing of the domestic cock, of these social sentinels, the watchword being caught and repeated, from one to another, for hundreds of miles around; insomuch that the whole country is for an hour or more in an universal shout."

There are vivid pages of battles with the alligators. The Indian of Bartram is the Indian of Cooper, a truly noble son of nature. Over it all hangs a golden haze of romance, viewed through which nature leads us back to a primitive state that has no alloy of sordidness, no taint of the ignoble of form or of action. The librarian doubtless had many calls for the *Travels*, and one thinks the Scioto Land Company owed Bartram a pension; for there were few, if any, more potent influences than his in stimulating the flow of immigration to this country.

For what audience was the other book that we have mentioned written, and what was its appeal to Americans? The title of Captain Jonathan Carver's book is, in full, *Three Years Travel Through the Interior Parts of North America, for More than Five Thousand Miles; Containing an Account of the great Lakes, and all the Lakes, Islands, and Rivers, Cataracts, Mountains, Minerals, Soils and Vegetable Productions of the North-West Region of that Vast Continent; With a Description of the Birds, Beasts, Reptiles, Insects, and Fishes Peculiar to the Country. Together with a Concise History of the Genius, Manners, and Customs of the Indians Inhabiting the Lands that Lie Adjacent to the Heads and to the Westward of the Great River Mississippi; And an Appendix, Describing the Uncultivated Parts of America that are the Most Proper for Forming Settlements*. The dedication is to the president of the Royal Society, and the first edition came out at London in 1778. For those who are interested in its ordinary aspects, the book, and its author, may be found fully treated of in the pages of Tyler.

If this book was popular in America in Carver's time, and it seems to have been, it throws a remarkable light upon how little the average American of that period knew of the Indians, and explains in part why there was such a brooding sense of mystery concerning them in the early pages of our literature. Carver gives us little about the life of the Indians that one would

suppose unknown to thousands of frontiersmen and of common report in frontier towns. But if such knowledge was wide-spread, why did Harris choose this book, from many others, for a small library? Such books are read for information, and not for the sense of recognition. Neither could style alone cause it to win its way, for in that respect it is in no manner remarkable. There may be another reason than that suggested at the beginning of the paragraph for its inclusion: it was famous in Great Britain, and having secured recognition there, it was thereby given the right of way in intellectually colonial America.

Passing over a number of heads in the catalogue of Harris as having little to offer us for our present purpose, we come to books of more general interest. The entries under poetry and the drama are worth being given in full.

"Barlow's *Vision of Columbus*; *Beauties of Poetry, British and American*; *Beauties of the English Theater*, 12 volumes; *Bell's Classical Arrangement of Fugitive Poetry*, 12 volumes; *British Album*; Collin's *Poetical Works*, with his Life, by Dr. Langhorne; Cowper's *Task and Poems*; Darwin's *Botanic Garden, a Poem*; Dwight's *Conquest of Canaan*; Francis's *Translation of Horace*, 4 volumes; Gray's *Poems and Letters*, with his Life, by Mason, Hayley's *Triumph of Temper*, (only duodecimo); Knox's *Elegant Extracts in Poetry*; Ladd (Dr.) *Poems of Arouet, Letters to Amanda*, etc.; Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and *Regained*; Miss More's *Search After Happiness*; Miss More's *Sacred Dramas*; Ogilvie's *Poems on Providence, The Day of Judgment, and other subjects*, 2 volumes; Pope's *Works*; Pope's *Translation of Homer's Iliad and Odyssey*; Scott's *Poetical Version of the Book of Job*; Shakespeare's *Plays*, Stockdale's edition, 2 volumes, octavo; Miss Smith's *Elegiac Sonnets*; Thompson's *Works*; Trumbull's *McFingal, Progress of Dullness*; Young's *Works*; Warton and Pitt's *Translation of Virgil*, 4 volumes; Miss H. M. William's *Conquest of Peru*; H. M. William's *Poems*, 2 volumes."

Here are some remarkable things. Shakespeare alone represents the great Elizabethan period, and the later years of the seventeenth century has only Milton to show, in anything like a full representation. The *Classical Arrangement*, in the only accessible edition of fifteen volumes (1789-91), gives Gold-

smith and Dr. Johnson, while a host of lesser poets of the eighteenth century are preserved for the gaze of the antiquarian. Could it have been the cost of editions that caused the omission of Dryden, Prior, Gay, Ramsay, Young, Shenstone, Churchill, Chatterton, Percy, Macpherson, Sheridan, and Crabbe? Harris was doubtless trying to do his best with his hypothetical small sum of money, and it may be argued that some of these authors were of such small compass that they could be fully represented in easily accessible collections, and so thoroughly established as classics that no compiler would dare leave them out. If this be the case, why are Collins, Gray, and Cowper represented? Though it is true that something other than their poetry is specifically mentioned in the editions of the two first. The most probable solution seems to be that in the first place Harris was too much swayed by the English reviews, *all* of which he had read. The latest English success loomed large in his eyes, as it did in those of every good American during this our period of pupilage, for how else can one account for the inclusion of the two works by Miss More, and two from the romancing pen of Miss H. M. Williams; while Ogilvie, who is as dead as either, is represented by two volumes? Moreover, Harris seems to have been a Puritan from puritanical Boston. Note how many of these volumes are of a religious nature: orthodoxy must above all be kept in sight and safe moral guides sought. The latter was apparently the most potent factor, as other evidence to be touched upon will tend to show.

Surprising as some of the above things may be, it is when the reader turns to the second division of "Imagination,"—that is, Fiction,—that he is most astonished—unless he knows Puritan New England. The eleven entries are: "Florian's *Select Tales*, Translated from the French; Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*; *Interesting Memoirs, a Novel*; *Julia de Roubigne*, by Makenzie [*sic*] 2 volumes; *Maria*, by Miss H. M. Williams; *Man of the World*, by Makenzie; *Man of Feeling*, by Makenzie; Moore's *Zeluco*; Smith (Miss [*sic*] Charlotte), *Emmeline, or the Orphan of the Castle*; ditto, *Celestina*; ditto, *Desmond*."

Where are Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, and Defoe? But let us reserve negative results to the next and last head, "Mis-

cellanies," and look at some very positive ones here. The novel of this list which sheds most light upon the psychology of the early American is Mackenzie's *Man of the World*, 1773. The copy before me, though printed in 1773, is a second edition; it was a popular book on both sides of the Atlantic. It is certainly not so lachrymose and sentimental as *The Man of Feeling*, and perhaps not so much so as "The Old Manor-house of Charlotte Smith" which the traveler Davis found in Virginia, in 1801, "lying on the table, of which the concluding part seemed to have been moistened with tears of sensibility"; but even so, it will do passing well.

The heroine of the first volume has features of a "melting expression, suited to that sensibility of soul we have mentioned her to be endowed with." "Though the arrival of tomorrow might be overlook'd, it could not be prevented," we are next told. Our forefathers were a sober people, and an established fact lost nothing in the re-stating. They swallowed large doses of such triteness with impunity. The novel hinges upon one of the most fascinating of all themes to an American of a century ago—that of the violation of a woman's honor. Sindall, the unrelieved black background for the blinding glare of celestial virtue, drugs the unapproachable heroine and accomplishes his purpose.

"And here let me pause a little, to consider that account of pleasure which the votaries of voluptuousness have frequently stated. I allow all the delight which Sindall could experience for the present, or hope to experience in the future. I consider it abstracted from its consequences, and I will venture to affirm, that there is a truer, a more exquisite voluptuary than he.—Had virtue now been looking on the figure of beauty, and innocence, I have attempted to draw.—I see the purpose of benevolence beaming in his eye!—He clasps her to his bosom;—he kisses the falling drops from her cheek;—he weeps with her;—and the luxury of his tears;—baffles description."

A daughter is born; the mother dies, and the father believes that the child dies also. But a gypsy takes the baby, keeps her for the first few years, and then leaves her by the roadside, where Sindall can find her; and in the second volume we discover her in his home, a young woman now, both she and Sindall ignorant

of her parentage. After long and vain attempts to seduce her, he has her carried off to a farm house, kept by a London prostitute, one of his former mistresses. Here he attempts to violate her, his own daughter; but her mother's brother, who through Sindall's plotting has been exiled as a criminal to America, returns just in the nick of time, and saves the daughter from the father, but only by mortally wounding him. Sindall dies forgiven, and almost in the odor of sanctity—he “makes a good end.”

“I have now,” says Sindall, “discharged the world; mine has been called a life of pleasure; had I breath, how false the title is; alas! I know not how to live.—Merciful God! I thank thee—thou hast taught me how to die.”

The author says in the last paragraph, spaced from the others to give it emphasis, of the hero and the heroine, now happily married, of course: “I have lived too long to be caught with the pomp of declamation, or the glare of an apothegem; but I sincerely believe, that you could not take from them a *virtue* without depriving them of a *pleasure*.”

Here in this book is surely horror enough for the love of seduction and worse, possessed, but only vicariously, by our forefathers; for in no country in the world was womanhood so exalted and further removed from such dangers. Why, then, were so many of their most popular novels of the type just sketched, and why should a novel be selected by Harris, probably the greatest authority then living on the literary needs of the American people, for a select library? When the *Man of Feeling* was written, the novel, whatever may have been its standing in Great Britain, was viewed with deep suspicion in this country. Timothy Dwight, president of Yale College, wrote: “Between the Bible and novels there is a gulf fixed which few novel readers are willing to pass. The consciousness of virtue, the dignified pleasure of having performed one's duty, the serene remembrance of a useful life; the hope of an interest in the Redeemer, and the promise of a glorious inheritance in the favor of God are never found in novels.” The novelist, then, trying to win approval for his wares, made them a medium for imparting moral and spiritual lessons; until in some cases the narrative thread trickles like a desert stream, half clogged or disappearing entirely, through the

sands of theological didacticism. Unction supplants human dignity; the sacred is ousted by the sanctimonious. Colors are laid on deep, that no one may, even though a fool, be deceived thereby. It mattered little to our ancestors, so deeply committed to the moral solution of human life, what Sindall or Montraville did in this world if only they (unequivocally) "pointed a moral and adorned a tale" for the next one.

Not the least element in this, as in other novels of the period, is, as might be deduced from what has just been said, the amount of worldly wisdom contained in them. For not quite all their "serious thoughts had rest in heaven."

"She reminded Lucy of the dangers to which youth and inexperience are exposed, by the sudden acquisition of riches; she set forth the many disadvantages of early independence, and hinted the inconstancy of attachments, formed in the period of romantic enthusiasm, in the scenes of rural simplicity, which are after to be tried by the maxims of the world, amidst the society of the gay, the thoughtless and the dissipated," says Mackenzie.

Compare Mrs. Radcliffe, Mrs. Roche, Mrs. Rowson, Miss More, or any of the other novelists whose names were a mighty force in those days. *Cælebs in Search of a Wife* (1809), by Miss More, passed through ten editions in one year, because it was an "improving" book.

Under his final heading, "Miscellanies," Harris gives a few books which he apparently was not sure how to classify or perhaps had overlooked at the proper place; but in general he evidently intended it for the minimum of reading that a person of general culture should do. It is as follows:

"*Adventurer*, 4 volumes; American edition of *Encyclopædia*, quarto, 18 or 20 volumes; Beattie's *Dissertations*; Bennet's *Letters to a Young Lady on Useful and Interesting Subjects*; Bennet's *Strictures on Female Education; chiefly as it relates to the culture of the heart*; Berquin's *Children's Friend*, 4 volumes; Berquin's *Friend to Youth*, 2 volumes; *Beauties of the Spectator*, *Tatler*, *Guardian*, etc., 2 volumes; *Beauties of Sterne*; Mrs. Chapone's *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*; Mrs. Chapone's *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse*; Cooper's *Letters Concerning Taste*; Creswick's *Female Reader*; Fitzosborne's *Letters*,

by W. Melmoth, Esq.; *Foresters, an American Tale*; Madam [sic] Genlis' *Theater of Education*; Goldsmith's *Miscellanies and Poems*; Gregory's *Comparative View of the State and Faculties of Man with the Animal World*; Gregory's *Lectures on the Duties and Qualification of a Physician*; Johnson's *Idler* and *Rambler*, 6 volumes; Kaims' *Art of Thinking*; Kaims' *Loose Hints upon Education, chiefly concerning the culture of the heart*; Knox's *Elegant Extracts in Prose*; Knox's *Elegant Epistles*; Knox's *Essays Moral and Literary*, 2 volumes, 12th edition, London, 1791; *Lady's Pocket Library*, containing Miss More's 'Essays,' Dr. Gregory's 'Legacy to his Daughter,' Lady Pennington's 'Advice,' M. de Lambert's 'Advice,' Mrs. Chapone on the 'Government of the Temper,' Swift's 'Letters to a Young Lady newly Married,' and More's 'Fables for the Female Sex,' duodecimo, Philadelphia, 1792; Lavater's *Aphorisms on Man*, Boston; *Lounger*, 2 volumes; *Mirror*, 2 volumes; Percival's *Father's Instructions*; Percival's *Moral Tales*; Phillips's *General History of Inland Navigation*; *Principles of Politeness*; *Watts on the Improvement of the Mind*; Williams (Miss H. M.) *Letters on the French Revolution*, Boston, 1793."

The novelists popular in America about 1793 have already been glanced at, and one is struck by the fact that they are almost all women. Under "Miscellanies," nine out of thirty-five entries are by women writers or make their appeal directly and exclusively to women readers, while a fair proportion of the others, one may safely assert, found fewer readers among men than among women.

This brings to our attention a feature of American cultural life which has, so far as I know, never been noted before. I allude to the powerful, I think I may say the dominating, influence of women in our cultural and in our literary life in the thirty years or so which preceded the appearance of Scott as a great force in fiction. *Literary* is used here in the sense "distinguished for beauty of style or expression"—the literature of power is meant, and not that of knowledge.

It cannot be denied that if one glances at the chronological outlines of British and of American literatures during this period, the array which meets his eyes seems to negative such a state-

ment. Yet (the remark is a trite one) it is not what is written that counts, but what is read. I have had occasion in the last few years to examine literally hundreds of old book catalogues, publishers' accounts, and newspaper advertisements in order to determine what the public was actually reading towards the end of the eighteenth century.

The men whose writings in belles-lettres were popular or near popular during the three decades before Scott are : Bunyan, Milton, Defoe, Pope, Addison, Thompson, Young, Darwin, Lewis, Johnson, Goldsmith, Mackenzie, Trumbull, Barlow, Dwight, and Brown,—a formidable list when one makes the statement that they were less popular than the women writers of the period. The authors of the gentler sex in the field who must be reckoned with are : Mrs. Radcliffe, Mrs. Roche, Mrs. Rowson, Miss More, Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Chapone, Miss H. M. Williams, Miss Porter, and doubtfully, for their popularity is not so apparent, Miss Burney and Miss Edgeworth. Practically all of these writers, it will be noted, are novelists. The short story, as distinct from the story that is short, had not, some will say, yet been invented ; and even if it had been, there would have been no adequate medium through which it might reach the public. Fight as he might against its moral obliquity, the primal love of a story was too deeply ingrained in the American of 1793 for the moralist to prevent the spread of the novel. And spread it did with a marvellous rapidity and in amazing volume. The deathless beauty of the writings of some of these men will secure audiences even after the New Zealander shall have ceased to muse among the ruins of London, while the works of most of the women grow as faint on the intellectual horizon of the world as a dissolving mirage. Yet that they were once the dominating influence in the literature of power a century and a quarter ago becomes more and more evident as one studies the subject ; and Harris has but furnished one document out of many to prove it. Our ancestors, then, even at the end of the eighteenth century, were, contrary to popular opinion, a race of novel readers, and not, more or less exclusively, readers of poetry. The vogue of poetry has been much overestimated, as the present writer has pointed out in another study.

Aside from a natural desire for a story, other influences were at work to feminize culture and belles-lettres. One suspects that many of the men of that period were a little bit ashamed of reading novels, so that not only were most of them produced by women but they read them too. There was, in fact, a great intellectual stirring among American women as the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries join. Davis, in his *Travels*, tells us that—

“His [Caritat’s, his publisher’s] talents were not meanly cultivated by letters; he could tell a good book from a bad one, which few modern Librarians can do. But *place au dames* was his maxim, and all the ladies of *New York* declared that the Library of Mr. Caritat was charming. Its shelves could scarcely sustain the weight of *Female Frailty*, the *Posthumous Daughter*, and the *Cavern of Woe*; they required the aid of the carpenter to support the burden of the *Cottage-on-the-Moor*, the *House of Tynian* and the *Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*; or they groaned under the multiplied editons of the *Devil in Love*, *More Ghosts*, and *Rinaldo Rinaldini*. Novels were called for by the young and the old; from the tender virgin of thirteen, whose little heart went pit-a-pat at the approach of a beau, to the experienced matron of three score who could not read without spectacles.”

Mr. George, the friend of Davis, writing from Long Island in 1801, says: “The girls in this village are mad after literature; they know not what to be at. Miss T—, a young lady of easy deportment, elegant conversation, and bold countenance, has bought *Tasso’s Gierusalemme*, and digs in a dictionary for his meaning.” There are other passages in the same book that bring out the stirring of women in the intellectual life of the time.

Why there should have been such an awakening, probably no one is qualified to answer fully; but much of the reason may be found in the disturbance of sex ratios and of social levels incident to the Revolution. Moreover, the energies of the men were too fully absorbed by the work of reconstruction in its various phases, material and intellectual, for them to hold their former place in things purely cultural.

As one glances back over the view of what Harris believes to be the intellectual needs of the American people in 1793, he is

struck by the apparent appeal which the latest success and the popular writer made to him, while the probable exclusion of some really great figures strikes us immediately. The names nowhere occur of Spenser, Johnson, Bacon, Bunyan, Richardson, Defoe, Swift, Fielding, Smollett, Burke, and Burns, while the names of writers that the ashes of time have buried deeper than any Pompeii, beyond the hope of resurrection, are in constant evidence. It is, however, only such documents as he has furnished us that will enable us to reconstruct the life of our forefathers, not always dwelling upon the heights, as some seem to imagine, but, like ourselves, struggling haltingly on broken crutches towards the light.

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